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DATE: JULY 29, 2009

TO: Department of Justice, Registration Unit

FAX NUMBER: (202) 514-2836

FROM: Qorvis Communications, LLC. (202) 496-1000

PAGE COUNT: 2 -- (Including Cover Page)

7/29 JUL 29 2009 PM 1:14
CRM/CCS/REGISTRATION UNIT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

28 July 2009

UNITED NATIONS, EU, JOIN IN PRAISING IRAQI KURDISTAN ELECTION AS
ENTHUSIASTIC AND TRANSPARENT*Congressional caucus lauds "another milestone" in Region's democracy*

The United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) has congratulated election officials and the people of Iraqi Kurdistan for conducting an election in an orderly environment, free of violence, on July 25 in voting for the President and Parliament of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

Farhan Haq, associate spokesman for the UN secretary-general, told a news briefing, that voters "exercised their right" by participation in high numbers in a peaceful fashion. He also praised the high turnout among female voter. In its statement UNAMI encouraged all observers to continue following the voting count, tabulation and complaint process to ensure full transparency.

The UNAMI comments were among many from independent organizations and observers who praised the election process and voting that surrounded what was one of the most competitive political races in the Region's history. Voter turnout was estimated at 78.5 percent of the almost 2.5 million eligible voters, according to the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq (IHEC), the national body in charge of running and tabulating the results. "The electoral process took place in accordance with international standards," the IHEC said in a statement.

Bipartisan leaders of the Kurdish American Congressional Caucus also heaped praise on the process by stating that the July 25 election "is just the latest example" of the Kurdistan Region "moving forward in fulfilling its democratic aspirations."

In an op-ed published by The Washington Times, Congressmen Lincoln Davis (D-TN) and Congressman Joe Wilson (R-SC) noted that "the newly elected Parliament has, among other attributes, more than 30 percent female membership. That percentage is greater than in any country in the Middle East, North America and most of Europe. Moreover, the Parliament has representation from every religious and ethnic constituency within the region." (The full op-ed can be viewed at <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2009/jul/28/a-new-benchmark-in-iraq/>).

Likewise, the Presidency of the European Union congratulated "the people of the Iraqi Kurdistan Region" on the elections. EU representatives followed the proceedings at polling stations across the region as well as through a long term electoral experts' mission. "A preliminary assessment shows that the elections were held in a relatively competitive environment and were carried out in a secure manner," the EU said. "The high voter turnout shows the commitment of the voters to express their political will in a democratic way."

The Kurdistan Regional Government expresses its deep appreciation for the thousands of Iraqi and international observers, as well of the many international organizations, for their assistance with preparations and capacity building for the elections process. The KRG goal was to have an election that met the gold standard for freedom, fairness and transparency, and we are proud that we exceeded those standards.

For more information, please visit www.krg.org.

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